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EYES ONLY

18 September 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Operational Services

SUBJECT : Early Retirement Legislation for the
Clandestine Services

1. I am stimulated by minutes of a Career Council meeting to ask that you set in motion and preside over a study within the Clandestine Services of desirable major changes in our career system, especially any changes that would require legislation.

2. By way of explanation of what I have in mind, it has been said that the career prospects measured in terms of prospective income, fringe benefits during service, rate of advancement, and perhaps above all conditions of retirement, offered today by the Military Services and by the Foreign Service are clearly superior to those offered by the Clandestine Services. The reason, of course, is that the terms of employment of the Foreign Service and the Military Services as determined by Congress take account of in one case the expectation of substantial service abroad and in the other frequent reassignments, periods of service abroad and the possibility of hazardous service. Moreover, Congress has recognized in these cases that the specialized nature of the individual's training and experience during his career may affect adversely his ability to obtain other employment upon retirement. Finally, within the terms of Congressionally established conditions of employment the Military Services at least in many cases permit and in other cases require early retirement as a means of keeping open the channels of advancement for junior officers.

3. By contrast, the terms of employment of the Clandestine Services are substantially those of the Civil Service in general, despite the fact that membership therein, (a) involves extensive foreign service, (b) occasionally involves hazardous duties, and (c) is rather more specialized than is the experience provided by membership in the Military or Foreign Services. In the special provision for certain retirement benefits, the Agency has strained the limits of what the Bureau of the Budget and the Appropriations Committee would permit. Nevertheless, the resulting

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special benefits combined with the normal pension provisions offer a candidate for early retirement a vastly less satisfactory option than would be open to him in one of the other Services. The result is not only to make the career as a whole less satisfactory to the individual but to prevent the institution by the Agency of a system of regularized forced early retirement which would keep open the channels of promotion. Thus, inadequate provision for retirement presently affects the prospects for CS officers at all grades. Indeed, the extreme slowness of promotion forced on us today has been quoted as a greater obstacle to good morale than any other single circumstance that affects the Service.] x

4. From my own observation this state of affairs has had other baleful though indirect consequences. There is considerable criticism of the CS on the ground that officers serving overseas enjoy perquisites in the form of housing, quasi-personal furniture and quasi-personal cars which cannot be justified by operational requirements and which are improperly generous. I myself have argued in reply to this criticism that this is not the time to cut down the general level of fringe benefits, especially in ways that will directly constitute a reduction of income for the individuals concerned. (This of course is not intended to apply to relatively small cases which involve real abuse.) It is my own view, however, that if it is ever possible to make sound changes in the terms of employment in the CS which would make it at least as attractive as the Military Services and the Foreign Service, we then could and should eliminate or scale down any fringe benefits that are invidiously favorable. To generalize this point, fundamental difficulties in our career system limit our freedom of action in such matters as reductions of fringe benefits, insistence on directed assignment, insistence on long tours under unofficial cover, and generally insistence on the maintenance of proper anonymity.

5. I am aware that the Director of Personnel and the DD/S have more than once studied the possibilities of early retirement legislation and have always ruled against it. One of their reasons has seemed to me valid but is only of temporary duration. I refer to the contention that we should carry out one reduction in force under [] as a proof of good faith before we go to Congress or the Bureau of the Budget for legislation. This we are in process of doing and I believe we will have established a record within only a few months from now.

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6. What I understand to be their principal argument against such legislation, however, seems to me totally without merit. It is that about half of the personnel of the Agency are not members of the Clandestine Services, do not serve extensively overseas, do not have narrowly specialized experience, and are therefore appropriately treated as part of the Federal Civil Service. In effect, the argument is that what cannot be done for the whole Agency should not be done for any part of it. To me this position is incomprehensible unless it is an expression of organized jealousy. Surely if one part of the Agency requires terms of employment parallel to those of the Foreign Service and other parts of it require terms comparable to the Civil Service, the answer is to have at least two different career systems, one appropriate to the needs of the CS and the other appropriate to the needs of the rest of the organization. It was only recently, after all, that the State Department was Wristonized. Prior to that event (deeply regretted by many) there was a Foreign Service and in addition there was a large corps of Departmental employees in the State Department whose terms of employment differed from those of the Foreign Service. I would argue that there is far more justification for different terms of employment for the two sides of this Agency than there ever was for Foreign Service and departmental groups of State Department employees. Indeed, I held to this view so strongly that if the Clandestine Services could not have a separate career system while remaining within the Agency, I would recommend that it be separated from the Agency and be placed elsewhere in the government.

7. These over-lengthy comments will, I hope, at least serve to indicate the range of problems with which I am concerned. My reason for asking you to set in motion a study of them within the Clandestine Services is my fear that we will not make any progress with this matter until we are able to make a concrete proposal and advance the considerations in support of it for study by the Director of Personnel and others. I would think that your consideration of this matter should begin with a review of the career systems of the Military and Foreign Services and a comparison of them with our own. I would hope that the end result would be a set of proposals with supporting considerations.

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8. I am asking Messrs. James Angleton, James Critchfield, Desmond Fitzgerald, and [] to serve with you. I am also asking [] to meet with you and provide such support as you need. I am sending a copy of this memorandum to the Director of Personnel so that he will know of my request to you and it is my hope that his office will be willing to help in this study as you may desire and that, in particular, they will provide you with earlier studies of this problem that have been made. At this stage, I am of course asking for your views and those of the above listed senior officers of the Clandestine Services. At a later stage the Director of Personnel will have an opportunity to comment on them.

RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Deputy Director
(Plans)

cc: DDP/COPS
C/EE
C/NE
C/CI
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SSA/DDS (Personnel)
Director of Personnel ✓

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